

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

The Commons
Law Center

A WORD FROM KAMRON

What a year. 2024 was filled with lots of new projects and partnerships, accomplishing goals in our strategic plan, and providing much needed legal services and education to those who may not otherwise have access.

Our success is due to that of our team and our donors. Without both, we would not be able to accomplish the success as we do. The Commons Law Center staff are some of the most committed and hardworking people I know. Every day I am amazed by the compassion and professionalism they offer each and every client we encounter. No matter how challenging the legal situation is, our staff treats people with dignity and respect.

Our donors continue to be generous, and I am touched that they see the value in the work we do and are willing to invest in our programs. We had a very successful Give!Guide and Season of Sharing campaigns, as well as a well-attended annual wine event. The gifts given in 2024 have fueled the work and services we offer, but there is more to do and more investments to be made.

As you will see in our Annual Report, the number of people we serve is increasing. However, the need in the community and around the state is growing exponentially. To meet this need we are bolstering and expanding our programs offered as well as targeting legal deserts. The number of evictions in Multnomah County has increased dramatically and the court has expanded hearing matters at the East County Courthouse. We are working on securing funding to expand our tenant eviction defense services in order to meet the needs of East County residents. We are also partnering with Williams & Russell CDC to provide small business legal services, and we have partnered with Rose Haven to provide family law and domestic violence know your rights workshops and legal coaching to low-income women, non-binary and trans folx. In 2025 we will also focus on providing services to those in rural areas, especially along the Southern Oregon coast.

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

2025 has already brought a lot of surprises and we anticipate even more. Our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion will continue to be unwavering because we know that diversity in identity, perspective and experience makes our organization stronger and more equipped to meet the needs of our community. As an organization we will continue to learn and to challenge not only ourselves, but the systems around us. We want people to have access to justice regardless of who they are or where they come from. We do not ask questions about citizenship. We recognize and embrace gender diversity. Being inclusive and kind can only make us stronger.

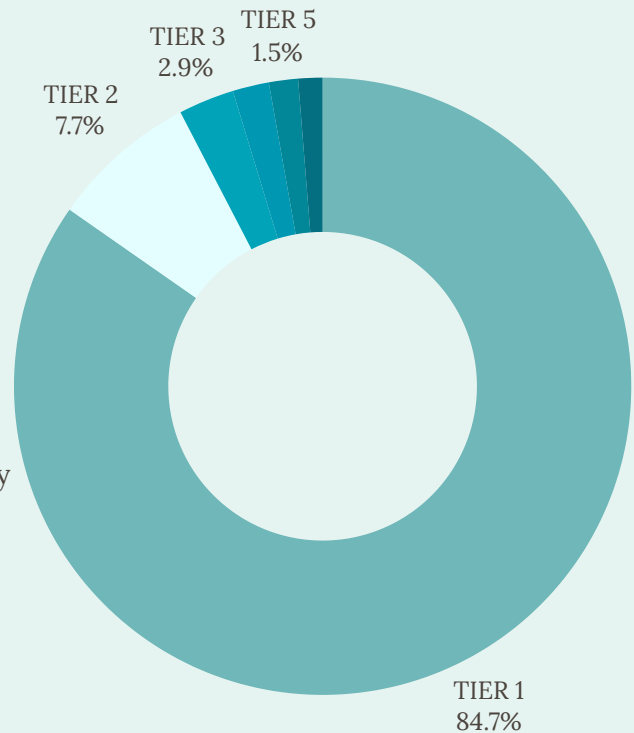
Whatever storms 2025 has in store for us, we are ready and we invite you to join us in our mission to protect housing, invest in local businesses, and empower people to navigate the complexities of the legal system for a more stable, equitable and vibrant future.



WHO WE SERVE

The Commons Law Center serves low-income people who fall below 400% of the federal poverty level. Despite our focus on the gap between those qualified for legal aid and those who can comfortably afford a private bar attorney, we find that the majority of our clients fall below the 125% FPL.

In order to keep the cost of our legal services low (or free for tenants), we have sought county funding, grants, and joint funding with organizations that support our clients with social needs other than legal help. We also utilize technology to connect with clients across the state and keep our costs as low as possible.



2024 CLIENT IMPACT

We received 17,471 phone calls from people looking for legal help and provided:

- 9,741 legal service hours
- 7,071 hours of service to tenants facing eviction
- Direct legal services to 1931 people.

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2024 our clients represented 22 counties across Oregon. Our tenant eviction defense clients were disproportionately people of color (60%), queer people (18%), and people with disabilities (30%).



300%

increase in tenant law
legal service hours
from 2023

CLIENT STORIES



TENANT LAW

“Every individual present at the courthouse from the Commons Law group has made me feel respected and heard. They, collectively as a unit, exude genuine concern for people in need. And pair that with actual successful outcomes, well, Commons Law has made a tremendous impact on my life and how I see myself. They make the world a better place for so many people; please continue assembling such an elite group.”

PROBATE

“Having been a monk for over 50 years, I have never required the services of a lawyer before. Although the Washington County Courts have been short staffed for some time -- Riley and Ekua helped me through the entire probate process with diligent patience. For that I truly thank them.”

ESTATE PLANNING

“Everyone was very friendly and accommodating. The process was smooth and I'm very grateful to have completed this very important part of my life.”

FAMILY LAW

“The Commons has been a lifeline when we needed legal guidance but could no longer afford counsel. Our custody case has been ongoing for over a decade, and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. After a devastating health diagnosis, The Commons came through. Maggie Stewart was compassionate, gracious, professional, caring and an overall exceptional attorney. I am a lawyer, and I can't recommend higher the services The Commons offers. Thank you for doing a tremendous service to the legal profession.”

“The Commons Law Center sets a much-needed standard for accessible legal services.”

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

TENANT LAW

In 2024 The Commons Law Center secured funding with Multnomah County. We expanded our staff to include two paralegals and four attorneys who have helped prevent and mitigate the worst effects of eviction for 1,384 households, more than double the number of clients served in 2023.



ESTATE PLANNING AND PROBATE

This year our estate planning and probate team has grown significantly. Riley and Ekua were joined by three SPPE candidates: Alex, Casey and Courtney. This dream team has helped 45 individuals and couples create their estate plans and guided 28 families through probate. We are in the process of producing 75 more estate plans and managing 90+ probate cases.



FAMILY LAW

Our expert family law attorneys helped guide clients through their cases with 398 coaching calls. We brought on Jeffrey Matthews, J.D. with 40 years of family law experience to mentor our attorneys and coach our clients.

We developed a Family Law 101 series on [YouTube](#) to help self-represented litigants make sense of the legal process and navigate their cases with confidence.



OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

BUSINESS LAW CLINIC

The Commons is thrilled to be partnering with Williams Russell CDC to offer Business Law services in 2025. Williams Russell CDC is a nonprofit dedicated to restoring the Albina Neighborhood, specifically the Hill block at Willams and Russell, with affordable housing, homeownership, and business services.



**Williams
Russell CDC**
Building Futures, Restoring Heritage



ROSE HAVEN

LEGAL HELP FOR ROSE HAVEN

The Oregon Community Foundation and the District Court Attorney Admission Fund are funding legal services for Rose Haven community members, focusing specifically on domestic violence and family law help, name & gender changes and powers of attorney & advance directives.

HOMEOWNERSHIP ASSET PRESERVATION PROGRAM

With the expansion from North Portland to all of Portland, our attorney Ekua Hackman helped 33 families with estate planning and probate, a 57% increase from 2023.



NEW PARTNERS

The Commons is glad to partner with 4Fathers, The Cupcake Girls, Muslim Educational Trust and p:ear to deliver legal education workshops and referrals for legal services.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

WILLAMETTE WEEK'S

**give
GUIDE**

GIVE!GUIDE

The Commons was grateful to return for our second year to Willamette Week's Give!Guide campaign.

We were able to connect with nearly 200 donors and surpassed our goal of \$30k.

MAJOR DONORS AND AWARDS (\$1,000+)

Michael Fuller	Kate Gribskov
Amy Subach	John Schlosser
Kimberly Pray	Amanda Winn
John Grant	Elizabeth Savage
Lloyd & Dana Taylor	Oregon Law Foundation
The Federal Bar Grant	



SEASON OF SHARING

Our Tenant Eviction Defense team was featured in The Oregonian as a part of their Season of Sharing end-of-year-fundraiser.

If you would like to support our work, please consider [making a gift](#).

Stay in touch with The Commons by signing up for [our newsletter](#).

DONORS (\$999 AND BELOW)

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EMILY KOMIE, J.D. (SHE/HER)
LUCAS ANGELL-ATCHISON (HE/HIM)
SEAN PERRY (HE/HIM)

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Director of Finance and Operations
Communications Director
Estate Planning & Probate Director
Estate Planning & Probate Staff Attorney
Estate Planning & Probate Fellow Attorney
Estate Planning & Probate Fellow Attorney
Estate Planning & Probate Fellow Attorney
Family Law Director
Family Law Senior Legal Advisor
Family Law Paralegal
Tenant Law Staff Attorney
Tenant Law Staff Attorney
Tenant Law Fellow Attorney
Tenant Law Fellow Attorney
Tenant Law Paralegal
Tenant Law Paralegal

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